Driftwood

My play touring early 2025

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I know I usually talk about my Doctor Who audio work on here, but I hope you don't mind if I start to discuss my theatre stuff and other projects. There will be plays and original radio drama in 2025, interspersed between the TARDIS landings...

DRIFTWOOD was a play of mine that toured in Autumn 2023. It was made by Pentabus Theatre Company, who have basically supported me my whole writing life (I wrote my very first Big Finishes, THE EMPTY HAND and 'BRAX AND THE DALEKS' in their writing turret), and ThickSkin Theatre, an award-winning physical

theatre company and my new besties.

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The 2023 outing of this play was a rural tour, which meant the show was mainly taken to village halls and community spaces. That's always been Pentabus' main ethos - bringing first-class theatre to remote and inaccessible places. I went to some lovely villages and was welcomed by some gorgeous communities. (*More often than not they fed me too. Quatt Village Hall even put on a themed spread for the show. Ham and pease pudding baps, mmmm.*)

Theatre is an ephemeral beast and you have to be content with making the show and letting it live on in memory, and/or the odd stylish publicity photo. But just sometimes, the stars align and a show can have a second-life.

Step forward DRIFTWOOD for an upscaled tour, February & March 2025!

We've got the creative team back together - and the original actors (James Westphal and Jerome Yates) are reprising their roles, which is good news for you, because they were AMAAAAZING.

But what is DRIFTWOOD actually about?

I'm so glad you asked.

DRIFTWOOD is the story about two brothers on a beach in Seaton Carew. Mark and Tiny haven't seen each other in a long time, but their dad isn't well and they need to figure out what to do. Yet there's something not quite right about this shoreline. For one thing, the government may be poisoning it. For another, an ancient undead entity is very possibly coming back to life...

I am a writer who left the North East but I keep being drawn back to it. And I was horrified when everyone woke up one morning in 2021 and discovered lots of marine life dead all along the coast, from Seaham to Whitby. And this horror show kept

happening again and again? Razor clams, starfish, jellyfish, you name it. My dad (a resident of Seaton Carew) would go down to the beach and look on in horror. The sight. The smell. The shock.

Yeah, there was a marine ecocide in the North East that should've been a way bigger scandal than it was. There were accusations that the government was covering-up the affair, since Hartlepool was due to be the site of one of their great Brexit ventures, the Teesside Freeport. There was a big suggestion that the work preparing for this venture, on the polluted River Tees, caused the sea-life massacre by disturbing old chemicals from Stockton's ICI days. You can read how the local fishing industry is still affected to this day here. I hope the truth will properly out one day. Like all these sorts of scandals, these things sadly take time.

DRIFTWOOD takes place during this period, using these events as a backdrop. We see it from the perspective of a local and an outsider. It's the macro against the micro, an environmental catastrophe against these fraying family ties. A dying dad, a dying town - sometimes it feels like the world is against you.

This may be starting to sound a little heavy. I promise you… there are lots of jokes. If you know my sense of humour - and if you like my audio stuff, you probably do - you'll know what to expect. Actors James and Jerome will make you laugh one minute and cry the next. There's also beautiful physical movement, cool video graphics, integrated captions… this show is a real theatrical beast that's punching above its weight.

Where can I see it?

I'm buzzing that DRIFTWOOD is going into some of my favourite studio theatres. Here's the list with links attached.

31 January-1 February: The Mill at The Pier | Wigan. *Click here to book.*

5 February: Theatre Severn | Shrewsbury. *Click here to book.*

6 February: Unity Theatre | Liverpool. *Tickets coming soon!*

7-8 February: Sheffield Theatre | Sheffield. *Click here to book.*

19-20 February: The Arc | Stockton-on-Tees. *Click here to book.*

22 February: The Dukes | Lancaster. *Click here to book.*

25 February-1 March: Chichester Festival Theatre | Chichester. *Click here to book.*

11-12 March: Belgrade Theatre | Coventry. *Click here to book.*

13-15 March: New Wolsey | Ipswich. *Click here to book.*

18-19 March: Leeds Playhouse | Leeds. *Tickets coming soon!*

20-21 March: The Lowry | Salford. *Click here to book.*

A full breakdown of the tour, and of the cast and creatives involved, can be found here.

I WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU THERE, If you can't make any of these performances, you can always buy the script (which helps keep me afloat anyway) or even stream a digital version on the ThickSkin website. This 2025 version will be different mind - it'll be made for a bigger space, and the script will be a little bit revised and updated.

Maybe you are a seasoned theatre-goer. Maybe you've never seen a play before. All

are welcome. And hopefully I'll be at lots of these shows (definitely at the Manchester ones), so if you're going to come, give me a shout!

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And I'd also just like to say... *Thank you for supporting theatre at a fucking weird time.* 2024 is a grim year for playwriting. I've had an abnormal amount of projects cancelled in the last six months and lots of other writers are in the same boat. The industry is struggling - it's all knock-ons from the lockdowns basically. Whilst bigger shows are putting on a brave face, the grassroots are being choked and pushed out. We're going to be feeling the effects of this for a long long time.

All the beautiful production photos in this Substack are by Andrew Billington.

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Another reason for this Australian to visit the UK. Cool!

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Marcel van Driel Nov 13, 2024

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I’m from The Netherlands, so it’s a bit too far away for me, but it’s sounds great!

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